

OUTLINES OF VEDANTA

by

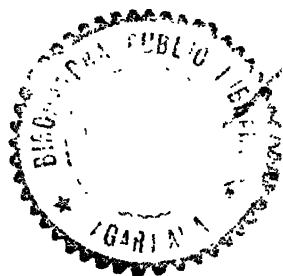
R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

Foreword by

T. L. Venkatarama Aiyar

Judge, Supreme Court of India

1927/8



CHETANA
BOMBAY

By the same Author:

DIALOGUES WITH THE GURU

THE CALL OF THE JAGADGURU

SPARKS FROM A DIVINE ANVIL

THOUGHTS FROM THE GITA

THOUGHTS FROM THE ETERNAL LAW

FOREWORD

This is an extremely valuable publication on a theme which must be of eternal interest to mankind—the relationship of man and the universe to the Eternal. The learned author expounds the subject in accordance with the tenets of the Vedanta, in particular as interpreted by Sankaracharya. According to the Vedas there was, in the beginning, only the Supreme Being called Brahman. Then the thought came to It — when or why or how, it will be futile to speculate — “I shall become many”. As a result, the five elements came into existence and then the animates, including man. Such is the story of the origin of the universe and it is thus narrated in this book:

“The Vedanta says that the Supreme Being was alone, One without a second. The Secondless One who was pure consciousness devised to ‘cognize’, but there was nothing else but Himself; so He had to cognize Himself; in other words, He made Himself the object of His own cognition. In Sri Sankaracharya’s inimitable words, ‘The Highest Self who was pure consciousness looked at Himself as Himself and became therefore the I; from that arose the root of differentiation’ (*Prabodhasudhakarā*, 95). He desired to become the many. But as there was nothing beside Himself, He had to create the many out of Himself alone” (pp. 71-72).

Thus, according to the Upanishads the created things are all manifestations of the Supreme Being as it existed before

creation, or of the 'formless *Brahman*', as it is termed in Vedanta. From this three propositions follow:

- (1) I, the Soul, am Brahman.
- (2) All This is Brahman.
- (3) Brahman, the essence of the soul, is identical with Brahman the essence of the All (p. 82).

This is what the Vedanta teaches and the main purpose of this work is to expound this concept and to show how it can be realized.

The first stage in this process, according to the author, is the knowledge of the distinction between a person and a thing (p. 88). A person is one who enjoys; a thing is one which is enjoyed. When we say that a person enjoys, who is it that really enjoys? Is it his flesh and bone that enjoy? No. They merely act on the urge of the senses. Therefore, it is the senses that enjoy and not the physical body, and accordingly the senses are the person and the body the thing. But then, it is the mind that moves the senses to action, and therefore the mind is the person and the senses the things in relation to it. Pursuing this line of reasoning, it is seen that it is the *Jivatma* or the soul that is the person and the rest of the creation, the *Prapancha*, is the thing. The next step in this process of realization is the perception that all things in essence are one and the same, even though they are different in names and forms. A table is different from a bench in name and form; but when once it is realized that they are both wood in different shapes, the sense of differentiation disappears. Following this line of thought, it will be seen that all things are merely different manifestations of the five elements in different names and forms. The stage is now

set for the realization of the concept of a first cause from which both the *Jivatma* and the *Prapancha* have emanated. The formless Brahman, or Supreme Being, which in its pre-manifestation stage was one and indivisible, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*, became manifest as *Jivatma* and *Prapancha* when the thought came to It, "I shall be many." And when that egoism is destroyed there is only the formless *Brahman*. This knowledge, when realized, must inspire the feeling of oneness of *Jivatma* and *Prapancha* with the Supreme Being. But how is the concept to be realized? Not merely through experience, because that can only be through the senses, whose vision and capacity are alike limited. Nor by reasoning, for as the Upanishad says, "How can you know Him who is Himself the knower?" It is here that faith comes to our aid. Hence the importance of the Vedas.

The author next proceeds to examine whether *karma*, rituals, and *upasana*, religious worship, can help us in the realization of the Godhead within us. Rituals are important, he says, because they instil into the mind a sense of duty and of sacrifice, wean it away from attachment to Matter and divert it in the direction of the Spirit. The Sastric injunctions ordaining certain *karmanas* and prohibiting others have the effect of regulating our desires and inducing in us a state of non-desire. This must help us to conquer *Avidya* and realize the oneness of the *Jivatma* with the *Paramatma*. *Upasana* again is very useful for it enables the devotee to realize that this universe is all only the manifestation of God. Each of the five elements can be regarded as a *Deva* in itself and an intense devotion to any one of them enables the devotee to reach the Supreme Being who has created it as well as the other elements. Just as an ant travelling across

one of the five fingers can reach the hand and then have a comprehensive view of all the fingers, so devotion to any one of the *Devas* will help in the realization that there is a Supreme Being behind, who is the *causa causans* of the whole *Prapancha*. Religion, says the author, is the handmaid of philosophy and the Hindu religion, both in its *karmakanda* and *upasanakanda*, can be said to be Vedanta in action.

I have touched on some of the salient points dealt with in this book. The author, a well-known lawyer in the State of Madras, gave up a lucrative practice to devote himself to the study and exposition of Hindu religion and philosophy and he is well-qualified to write on the subject also, as one who is an ardent aspirant in the realization of it. His father, it may be mentioned, was likewise a leading lawyer who gave up his profession and became a *sanyasi*. This work is primarily intended for those earnest students of Vedanta who find themselves lost amidst its expansive regions, like the person referred to in the Chhandogya Upanishad, and it is sure to prove an admirable guide to them. It is simple and can be understood by all persons who have a mind to know, and it is not overloaded with technical terms or long and abstruse discussions. Illustrations are freely given which make the meaning clear beyond all doubt. To those sincere minds which have been thrown into a state of doubt and scepticism by the advance of science, this book will bring fresh faith, hope and happiness.

T. L. Venkatarama Aiyar

PREFACE

This is a modest attempt to present the basic principles of the Vedanta in a language fairly free from technicalities. That great philosophy, both in theory and in practice, is too wide and elaborate to admit of its being compressed within the short compass of this book, which aims only at a popular presentation of the subject. I have therefore confined myself to a consideration of the main principle of the absolute oneness of the Reality and contented myself with a bare enunciation of the means by which that truth can be realised.

I have no doubt that to such of my readers as have made a study of the Vedanta the presentation made here will seem quite elementary and meagre and capable of much improvement, both in matter and in manner. But I may mention that this work is mainly intended for those who have passed through the process of modern education, divorced as it is from our ancient Vedic culture, and are yet eager to know the basic principles of our philosophy. If it succeeds in interesting them and in making them seek closer acquaintance with the original works on the Vedanta, I shall consider my labour amply rewarded.

I must respectfully record here the deep debt of gratitude that I owe to my revered father Brahmasri G. Ramachandra Aiyar of the Tirunelveli Bar (later Sri Ramananda Sarasvati Svaminah) for the taste he infused in me from my boyhood for our philosophical religion and also for the careful training that he gave me in his natural desire to see me grow up a true Hindu. That I have not fulfilled all his

expectations cannot take away from the magnitude of my obligation to him. I may mention also that he was kind enough to go through and approve of this book while in manuscript.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not also respectfully acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Mahopadesaka Brahmasri S. Rajavallabha Sastrinah of the Tirunelveli Hindu College, but for whose lucid exposition the Advaita literature would have remained inaccessible to me.

This work is a revised and enlarged edition of my "Thoughts from the Vedanta", which was published many years ago and is now out of print. Messrs Chetana Ltd., of Bombay, well-known publishers of philosophical literature, approached me to revise the book and allow them to publish it under the new title "Outlines of Vedanta". I am grateful to them for the neat and attractive form in which they have brought out this edition.

R. Krishnaswami Aiyar.

CONTENTS

DEDICATION	i
FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE	xi

Chapter 1.

THE GOAL OF LIFE	1
-------------------------	----------

1. Nature of the Goal, 2. Person, Thing and the Supreme Entity, 3. Necessity for Right Understanding. 4. A Misconception.

Chapter II.

THE SCOPE OF EXPERIENCE AND REASONING	8
--	----------

1. Proofs, What They Are, 2. Elements of Experience, 3. Difficulties in Having Right Experience, 4. A modern Notion Criticised. 5 Process of Cognition, 6. Fallibility of Inference, 7. Reasoning How far Helpful.

Chapter III.

FAITH	18
--------------	-----------

1. 'Word' and Faith, 2. What is Faith? 3. Faith in Veda-Sastras, 4. Faith and Right Knowledge, 5. Faith and Desire, 6. Faith and Action, 7. Faith Indispensable.

Chapter IV.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

30

1. Introductory remarks, 2. Our problems, 3. Incompetence of Reason, 4. Idealism, 5. Materialism, 6. The Above Systems Examined, 7. Sankhyas, 8. True Philosophy, 9. Activity, 10. Quality, 11. Form, 12. Appearance, 13 Effect is Only Cause Under Limitation, 14. The Principle Applied to the Universe, 15. The Relation of the Universe to God.

Chapter V.

SOME EPITHETS OF GOD

43

1. Three Epithets, 2. Omnipresence Defined, 3. Omnipresence of God, 4. Omniscience of God. 5. Omnipotence Defined, 6. How is God Omnipotent? 7. The Epithets Significant Only in Vedanta.

Chapter VI.

THE MEANS OF REALISATION

50

1. 'Sat' or Essence of the Universe, 2. Enlarge Your Conception, 3. Love and Service, 4. Analyse the Perceiver, 5. Methods Examined, 6. All Methods Useful..

Chapter VII.

THE BLISS OF THE SELF 58

1. The Fountain of Joy, 2. The Five Coatings, 3. Joy Under Limitation, 4. The Joy Supreme.

Chapter VIII.

THE SPLITTING OF THE SELF 64

1. Personality, 2. An Analysis, 3. Varieties of Vanity, 4. The origin of Vanity.

Chapter IX

VANITY AND ITS USES 73

1. The Bondage of Vanity, 2. The Creative Power of Vanity, 3. Regulation of Vanity, 4. An Aid to Renunciation.

Chapter X

THE DOCTRINE OF ONENESS 81

1. Three Equations, 2. Who Am I? 3. What is This? 4. The Supreme Power, 5. The Absolute.

Chapter XI

'PERSONS' AND 'THINGS' 88

1. Four Steps in the Vedanta, 2. Person Analysed, 3. Religion is Philosophy in Practice, 4. Identification of 'Person' with 'Thing', 5. Identification twofold — Appositional and Possessory.

Chapter XII

MISTAKEN IDENTIFICATION

98

1. Person Cannot Desire, 2. Thing Cannot Desire, 3. Who is it That Desires? 4. 'Thing' Analysed, 5. The Imperfect Thing, 6. Stages in the Identification Between Person and Thing, 7. Our Present Position.

Chapter XIII.

TRAINING FOR PERCEPTION OF DISTINCTNESS

106

1. Sense of Identity, 2. Sense of Possession, 3. Jnana and Karma Margas, 4. Sacrifice, 5. Activity Classified, 6. Object of Activity, 7. Regulation of Activities, 8. Regulation of Desires, 9. Sense of Desirability, 10. Sense of Distinctness.

Chapter XIV

LIMITATIONS OF THE SUPREME

118

1. Characteristics of 'Thing', 2. Difficulty of Detachment, 3. Distinctness Analysed, 4. No distinctness in the Essence, 5. Some Problems, 6. What is Creation of the Universe? 7. There can be no When, How or Why of Creation, 8. True Worth and Meaning of the Creation-Texts.

Chapter XV

CONCENTRATION

128

1. How to Get Over Distinctness? 2. The Direct Method of Jnana. 3. The Indirect Method of Upasana. 4. The Method Explained. 5. The Devas. 6. Mode of Concentration. 7. Nature of Concentration. 8. Forms. 9. Devas not Mythical. 10. A Summary.

Chapter XVI

SENSE OF DUTY AND SERVICE

141

1. Preliminary. 2. The End of the Second Step. 3. The Further Steps. 4. How to Get Over One's Individuality? 5. Two Initial Methods: The Higher and the Lower. 6. Right and Duty.

Chapter XVII

DEDICATION AND UNIFICATION

149

1. Four Stages. 2. The Sense of 'I'. 3. The Sense of 'Mine'. 4. Necessity for Dedication. 5. The Sense of 'Thine'. 6. The Devas Again. 7. The Highest Devas. 8. The Sense of 'Thou'.

Chapter XVIII

THE REALISATION OF THE SUPREME

158

1. Introduction. 2. An Example of Limitation. 3. Limitation Threefold. 4. Nature of the Supreme. 5. Relative Value of the Steps. 6. Faith Again.

CHAPTER I

THE GOAL OF LIFE

1. NATURE OF THE GOAL

All activity in the universe, of man and of every other living being, if analysed, will be found to have for its object one of these three:- *to be, to know, and to be happy*. A little more thought will make clear to us that the ambition of all thinking beings is to exist *always* and *everywhere*, to know *always* and *all things* and to be happy always and *under all conditions*; that is, their aim is to realise the ambition of existence, knowledge and happiness *absolutely*, unlimited by any restrictions of time or space. Is this ambition legitimate or practically attainable? It would seem so, for we have in us the seeds for realising this ambition in its entirety. These seeds are to be found in the instinctive abhorrence of death, ignorance and misery. The instinct for preservation of life and for repulsion of anything likely to threaten life is well known to be universal. There is not a fool in the whole world who would like to be called a fool or who does not think some others to be fools. That happiness is the goal of all and pain is by all instinctively hated needs no demonstration. These instincts, ingrained in all living beings, cannot be explained on any other hypothesis than that of the three characteristics of existence, knowledge and happiness being essential to the very nature of conscious life.

But man, being endowed with the faculty of transcending mere instinct and of looking forward to the goal of life, should certainly use this faculty in helping that instinct by making determined attempts to reach the goal as early as possible. Unfortunately however, man, the ordinary man, has always had a tendency to be satisfied with the present and to ignore the future. He has been so, not because he does not want to reach the ultimate goal, but because he often falls into the error that that goal is no other than the attainment of happiness, howsoever inadequate, in the immediate present. It should therefore be the endeavour of all knowing men to get rid of this false idea of the importance of the immediate present relative to the actual goal of life. This, again, they can do only if they have a proper conception of that goal. That goal is, as mentioned above, the attainment of a perfect state of existence, knowledge and happiness, untrammelled by any kind of limitation, the supreme state of God Himself. The very idea of such a state will seem impossible to us, accustomed as we are to think of everything in terms of limitation. Even the philosopher in most cases is unable to grasp it. The Bhakta or devotee of God is in most cases afraid to admit the possibility of such a state, for it seems to him profanation for a man to aspire to have the very characteristics of God Himself. It is therefore left to the Advaita Vedantin alone to boldly proclaim the great truths revealed in the Vedas that everything in the universe, organic or inorganic, conscious or unconscious, is in its essence but God, that our final goal is the realisation of our absolute oneness with Him, and that the perception of identity between oneself and God is the highest form of devotional worship.

2. PERSON, THING AND THE SUPREME ENTITY

The whole of creation will be found to consist of entities which are either *persons* or *things*.¹ A *person*, if analysed, will be found to have three inseparable characteristics:- He *is*, he *knows*, he *enjoys*. A *thing*, similarly analysed, will be found to have also three essential characteristics:- It *is*, it *is known*, it *is enjoyed*.² The common characteristic therefore of a *person* and of a *thing* is that he or it *is*. The Vedanta teaches us the existence of a third entity which transcends and comprehends all creation and whose characteristics therefore are that it *is*, it *knows and is known*, *enjoys and is enjoyed*. Such a third entity is God or Brahman.³ It will be clear that, if there is such a comprehensive

1. Instead of using the words 'persons' and 'things' to signify what we mean, we could have employed the words 'organic' and 'inorganic', 'conscious' and 'unconscious', 'subject and object', etc; but we prefer the words 'persons' and 'things', as there are ideas associated with the other expressions which we want to exclude from the conceptions that we have to place before the reader; and further the two selected words are in our opinion more adapted to convey directly our meaning. As may be seen from the characteristics of a person that we shall mention presently, it will be correct to call him a 'perceiver', an 'enjoyer' or 'experiencer', using the corresponding passive names for a thing. But it has to be noted that these expressions do not connote the person in his entirety but only embody single characteristics of his. We want it therefore to be understood that even if we sometimes use these limited terms we mean only the person or the thing as the case may be and not simply any limited aspect of them.

2. It may seem at the outset that, by using the word 'enjoy', we accord no place to pain and suffering in our analysis of the universe. Though we shall have occasion to show later on that, arising as they do, from a sense of imperfectness pain and suffering form no essential element either of the person or of the thing, it will be sufficient for the present to take the word 'enjoy' as used in the general sense of 'experience'.

3. Because the word 'God', in ordinary parlance, connotes a 'personality', ever so supreme and transcendent, it is safe to use the word 'Brahman' to signify that Transcendent Being Who is strictly impersonal, as will be seen later on.

entity, a *person* is but a limited aspect of that entity and a *thing* is but another limited aspect of the same entity. A *person* is not therefore essentially different from that entity; nor can a *thing* be essentially different from it. The Advaitin therefore may well say that every living being is Brahman Itself and that every *thing* also is equally Brahman Itself. But a *person* cannot be a *thing* as they are two *distinct* aspects which bear severally distinct sets of attributes. When we reach the stage where we can realise the existence of that third entity which transcends the aspects, the aspects will cease to have any significance for us. It is from that stage that the Vedantic teaching "The universe is unreal" is given, not for us to whom the aspects are all in **all**. Again from the same viewpoint it is given out that a *person* is not different from that Supreme Entity, not for us to whom the *person* seems to be an object of everyday direct experience while the third entity is but a thing of doubtful hearsay. It is usual to say that the whole of the philosophy of the Upanishads can be compendiously expressed in half a stanza: "Brahman is real, the universe is unreal, the Soul is but Brahman Itself and none other." But by learning this half-stanza we are as near to understanding our philosophy as the mere hearing of the equally compendious teaching "That thou art" takes us near to Liberation or Moksha. It may be that expressions like these are of great use as mnemonics to persons who have mastered the teachings of our sacred literature; but they are practically useless to us at present.

3. NECESSITY FOR RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

It may be legitimately asked why we should trouble our heads about these teachings if they are not for us. In fact, as at present situated we need not, and strictly speaking we should not, trouble ourselves. But unfortunately

these teachings, which were treasured as the highest and sublimest of truths reserved to be imparted only to the qualified and the tested, are now thrown broadcast so that they have become the common property of the worst sinner and the noblest saint. The Vedantin cannot dispute the accuracy of these teachings even though repeated by others than himself, and he has to be on the defensive to repel any false or mischievous interpretation that may be attempted to be thrown on them. Sri Krishna in insisting upon the duty of Arjuna to fight asks him to remember that by killing others he can incur no sin. A murderer may also quote this passage to show that he can incur no sin by killing another. It is the duty therefore of every true devotee of Sri Krishna to refute such a mischievous perversion and define the exact context in which He gave the teaching and the exact import of His words. Similarly therefore it falls to the duty of a true Vedantin to refute any false significance that may be attributed by others to his teachings. The standpoint from which the teachings are given must be considered well. Otherwise, the teachings are likely to be misunderstood. A student studying in lower classes is taught the definition of parallel lines as lines which, produced ever so far both ways, *do not meet*; and on the basis of this definition he is taught to understand and solve many problems. The advanced student of geometry will be taught that parallel lines are lines which, produced, *do meet* at infinity. The latter teaching will be accurate and intelligible only if the student has some conception of infinity. If this teaching is given to the lower class student, who cannot conceive of infinity, it will not only produce in him no impression, but will also make him lose faith in the accuracy of the teaching already imparted to him, that parallel lines never meet, and thus effectively prevent him from pursuing the courses

of studies which are necessary preliminary steps towards understanding the higher truth, that parallel lines *do meet*. It is to avoid such mischievous use of higher teachings and to minimise the value of the lower that our Sastras are very particular about the qualifications of the aspiring student.

4. MISCONCEPTION

If we may say so, the criticisms that have been urged against Advaitins like Sri Sankaracharya are most of them due to the want of sufficient understanding or patience to ascertain from their writings themselves the standpoint and the import of the statements criticised. As soon as the great Acharya says that the world is *Mithya*, his critics conclude that he meant that the world was non-existent and attack this assumed conclusion of his by all sorts of arguments. We have heard it seriously urged: "According to you, the world is non-existent. Yourself and your teaching are part of the world. You and your teaching are therefore non-existent." The logic of this argument is perfect; only the basic assumption that according to the Advaitin the world is non-existent is not true: and, even supposing that he does mean it, that teaching is not for us as we are. If the critics had but more patience, they would have taken the trouble to learn from Sri Sankaracharya himself what he means by *Mithya*; for the Acharya with an extraordinary carefulness and foresight has taken scrupulous pains to define the significance of the word as used by him. The truths embodied in this and similar statements have reference only to the highest or ultimate ideal to be striven after by all of us and to be actually realised in experience *only at the end* of our course of training. They have no reference to our immediate aims, nor are we promised immediate full understanding of those truths. By exposing those ultimate truths to the gaze of the passer-by, we have done a great

disservice to the cause of humanity. We have placed before the people an ideal which they cannot easily comprehend, much less attain. The result is that ordinary minds turn away from it and deduce the impossibility of the ideal from their own incompetence to realise it, and others hanker after the ideal, ignoring the various intermediate stages which the aspirant has necessarily to pass through before he can reach it. Suppose I am told that Kasi is a very holy city which every Hindu should visit. I may not have the money or the physical strength to undertake the costly and arduous journey. Can I at once conclude that Kasi cannot exist, except in the imagination of poor deluded fools? Or, again, I may believe in the existence of Kasi and may long to be there. I am told that I must take the train for Kasi. Suppose now I go to the railway station and I ask the guard where the train at the platform will take me to. Most probably he will answer "To Madras", without caring to explain that the route to Kasi is *via* Madras, where I will get another train. What will one think of my intelligence if I refuse to take that train, because my destination is Kasi and not Madras? Such is the case of the people who would like to have the highest bliss of the Self, promised in the Upanishads, but would refuse to undergo the trainings in Karma and Upasana as preparatory steps towards the attainment of that bliss. This refusal to undergo the preliminary training can only be attributed to the want of necessary faith in the possibility of attaining that bliss and also in the competency of the means prescribed in the Sastras, for the modern has an instinctive aversion even to the word 'faith'. As a 'reasoning' animal, he has the greatest contempt for those who are simple enough to believe without 'proof'. But what is 'proof'? We shall do well to consider this question before we proceed further.

CHAPTER II

EXPERIENCE AND REASONING

1. PROOFS, WHAT THEY ARE

By *proof* is meant the means by which the existence of the thing sought to be proved is brought home to us. The Vedantic system of thought recognises six such means, and some of the other systems more and some less. By a little adjustment of definitions however we can reduce all of them to three. These three are Experience, Inference and Authority. At the outset it would seem that the last can never be a method of proof. We shall reserve it for discussion afterwards and now begin with Experience.

2. ELEMENTS OF EXPERIENCE

All thinkers from the confirmed materialist to the profoundest philosopher agree in according to Experience the first place among the methods of proving a thing. But it is only a very few that care to analyse the true nature of Experience. Experience, as we generally understand it, is a mental impression brought about by the contact of our senses with the thing experienced. Experience is not such a simple process as we are apt to assume, but a process which requires a conscious entity, the mind, the senses, the object and also a contact between it and the senses, as well as a contact between the mind and the senses. Let us take an example. Suppose I say "I see this table." What are the necessary elements composing that process of seeing? First of all, I must be here to see it. Even if I were here, I cannot see it unless I withdraw my mind from wandering about and

direct it towards the table. Even if I direct my mind towards it, I cannot see it if I am blind; even if I am not blind, I cannot see it unless I turn my eyes upon it. Last of all there must be a table to be seen. If any of these ingredients, the experiencer, the mind, the eye, the table and their mutual contacts be absent, no experience can arise. If I allow my mind to be thinking of my home, my eyes, even though wide open, cannot convey to me any impression of the table. If in the absence of any of these elements we *do* have experience, those experiences are generally characterised as false and are called delusions. If I see a man standing before me when there is no man, or if I shut my eyes but see a figure threatening me, the ordinary conclusion is that I am the victim of delusions and my seeing cannot be called right experience.

3. DIFFICULTIES IN HAVING EXPERIENCE

Having thus analysed the elements necessary to give rise to an experience, we will easily recognise that the truth or correctness of an experience depends upon the perfection or purity of all and every one of the agencies employed—the mind and the senses—as well as upon the intensity of contact between these *inter se* and between these and the object to be experienced. If the eye is diseased, black may seem blue and yellow white. If the tongue is foul, the most delicious sweets will taste bitter. If the mind is unhinged, a pillar may appear to be a man and the vacant air will be peopled with numberless forms. The slightest aberration from the purity of the mind or the senses will cause a corresponding aberration in the accuracy of the experience. For experience, therefore, to be an infallible guide to us in the proper perception of a thing, the mind and the senses ought to be intensely purified so as to remove the slightest

shadow of doubt about their capacity to receive true impressions. Then again, I may have the best of eyes, but if the object is a dozen miles off how can my eyes see it? Even supposing it is near by, how can I see it if it is jumbled together with other things which also claim my attention? Again, how can I see it aright if somebody is playing close by on some sweet musical instrument thus distracting my mind? The perception therefore can be true and accurate only if the sight pervades the whole of the object seen and if the mind identifies itself with the seeing eye, to the exclusion of every other sense. It is now for us to consider if experience thus analysed is always possible in its perfect sense to us, who presume to rely so much upon it to prove or disprove for us the existence of a particular thing. The body, by its very nature, has inherent in itself the seed of decay and death, and the senses which have to function through that body can never be faultless. The best that we can do is to keep the body clean, free from further contamination in the course of our life and also to eradicate by the use of medicines, fasts and penances, little by little, whatever harmful substances have crept into the composition of the body. We can thus refine it to a very large extent and we will then be able to perceive various things which we were not able to see or to see aright before. So with the purification of the mind. We must first learn to keep it aloof from bad or disquieting thoughts by replacing them with good and elevating ones, and then we can secure for the mind a kind of equilibrium in which it will be able to have conceptions which the impure mind can never hope to. We may also mention, while we are on this topic, that strictly speaking the mind is, in a sense, impure even if it dwells on good conceptions; for, love, affection, pity and so on are as much impurities as hate, cruelty, and others of the sort, in

so far as they both tend to disturb the equilibrium of mind which is essential for correct perception. Such purity of the body and equilibrium of the mind are very difficult to attain. Nevertheless, it must be our earnest and constant endeavour to secure them at any cost. They can be obtained only after a laborious course of training, and it may take years and perhaps lives together to attain them. The whole course of *Acharas* and *Upasanas* ordained and insisted upon in our Sacred Writings is primarily intended to secure this purification of the senses and the mind, though the ultimate object ever remains the realisation of a state of being, transcending the senses and the mind.

4. A MODERN NOTION CRITICISED

But, unhappily for the modern age, a popular notion has arisen—that the Sastric rules are out of date and arbitrary and require modifications to suit the needs of changing society. The exponents of this novel idea forget, or have yet to know, that the mind and the senses are inanimate agencies trainable by their employer and subject to definite natural laws. Nobody dares accuse the law of gravitation of being archaic, out of date or arbitrary. Is it not unjust that if by a mere slip of my shoe I lose my footing I should roll down the steps and break my limbs? Ought not the law of gravitation to take into account the fact that I did not intentionally slip? Again, if the machines of an aeroplane get out of order, ought not the same law to recognise that man has conquered gravity and that it has become therefore archaic or obsolete and has no business to precipitate the aeronaut into the sea? If the body, the senses and the mind are objects that can be brought under control and discipline, as every object in the world can be, any law relating to them must, in fact, be eternally true and un-

changeable, as much as the law of gravitation, until they cease to be what they are. The Sastric rules of Achara and Upasana are similarly in the nature of natural laws relating to the purification of the instruments of knowledge. There is no use quarrelling with them. There is no use trying to modify them either. The Sastras never compel any one to do or abstain from doing any particular thing. They give him the full power and freedom to obey their dictates or disregard them; but they warn him beforehand that, as their laws are eternal and for ever true, he will be bringing down on himself the consequences of disobeying them. No kind of law can do anything more. The Penal Code cannot by a summary sweep wipe out the crimes of murder and theft from the face of earth, but can only lay down the consequences of such crimes. If the thieves and the murderers persist in their crimes, they have only to thank themselves that the punishment follows. So with the Sastras. There remains the further question: how do we know that these Sastras *are* eternal laws and immutable like the laws of Nature? This question can be answered only by reference to example and authority which will be considered later on. At this stage it will be sufficient to understand that the main object of our Sastric training is to equip us with the mind and the body in such a refined and faultless condition that we may rely even on them as safe instruments of right perception or experience.

5. PROCESS OF COGNITION

Before we leave this subject of direct perception, it will be useful to state shortly how our system has analysed the process in which the knowledge of the thing seen arises in the seer. Those acquainted with the modern sciences of optics and the physiology of the sensory system will re-

member that, according to the western system of thought, the object of perception acts upon the sense organ which, on receiving a physical impression — optical, auditory or otherwise, transmits it to the brain through the sensory nerves. They may therefore be a little surprised to learn that in our ancient system the process is explained to be exactly in the reverse order. Whatever be the momentum of the impact of the object on an organ of sense, no perception is, as a matter of fact, caused unless the mind is in tune with that organ. The first condition of a perception is the identification of the mind with the particular organ. As the eye, the ear, the nose etc. convey distinct sensations to the mind, the mind has to be a substance comprehensive enough to identify with those organs. Not only that. Mental faculties require for their substratum a material which can assume at any moment any shape or form, whether it is only in the nature of reproduction, as in recollection, or in that of new combination, as in imagination. The mind is conceived therefore to be, as it were, a fluid substance. The mind flows out through the eye on to the object, envelopes it as seen and is lost in it for the moment and is also for ever impressed with the moulding thus obtained. It is this moulding that makes it possible for the experiencer to record and recollect experiences. As we said in the beginning, the intensity of this moulding is a proof of the extent of the accuracy of the perception. Again, this intensity of moulding has to depend upon the intensity of the impact with the object, otherwise called concentration, as well as upon the fineness or impressionability of the mind substance. The interaction of mind and body upon each other is a fact acknowledged even by modern science, and it will be unscientific and illogical to deny the necessity for regulating our activities, physical and mental, and

individual and social, if we want to have a clear and pure mind. Hate, anger and lust have a tendency to harden the mind against receiving impressions, and they must be sedulously avoided if we want our mind to retain its natural fluidity. Reasoning in the same line, it may be said that, as the impressionability of mind increases with its purity or fineness, the purer the mind the greater is the chance of contamination also; that is why the Sastras prescribe more and more restrictions when we ascend from the lower scales of human being to the highest. Further, as in the case of other fluid substances, the mind also has a tendency to flow out at the nearest outlet; and it requires no small amount of strength and perseverance to store it up and let it out in any particular direction chosen by us, to the exclusion of other directions. Concentration therefore is not an easy matter, and right training in concentration is a chief aim of our system of Upasana or one-pointed devotion. To the one who has, by training, developed high impressionability and such a power of concentration and, thus, qualified his mind to receive intense impressions, forgetfulness or lapse of memory cannot but be rare. It would have been seen from the above that direct experience, recognised by all as a sure means of knowledge, is not after all, as already remarked, such a simple matter, and we ought therefore to be especially careful when we seek to direct our impure minds, trained from time immemorial largely in the pursuit of selfish ends, to solve the problems of Life and Existence.

6. FALLIBILITY OF INFERENCE

The next subject of our enquiry will be *Inference*. Inference is possible only when we know two facts and the relationship between them. If there is any doubt as to the existence of either of those facts, or as to the persistency

of the relationship between them, there can be no inference. As regards those facts, we have to rely upon direct perception which we have already found to be beset with serious and various difficulties. The persistence of the relationship has to be found out only by a long series of direct perceptions, equally liable to innumerable chances of error. We will explain this with reference to the stock example of the Hindu logician. (1) Wherever there is smoke, there is fire. (2) There is smoke on the mountain. (3) Therefore there is fire on the mountain. The first statement is the general proposition on which the ultimate inference has to rest. It must therefore be beyond doubt. We must first make sure of the correctness of the statement. How did we arrive at such a general proposition? By a series of experiments in direct perceptions. We saw fire in the kitchen, in the burning hayrick and at so many other places. We also saw that smoke was always there. Hence our induction. But this inductive inference that wherever there is smoke there is fire may still be false, for, strictly speaking, we can only say that wherever we have seen smoke there has been fire and not absolutely that wherever there is smoke there must be fire. We have seen some fanciful people who smoke cigar, throw it away and after the lapse of a few minutes slowly emit smoke through their nostrils. It will be certainly incorrect to say that there is fire in their nostrils. Similarly there may be several other instances which take away from the accuracy or universality of this general proposition. Assuming however that it is accurate and universal, we must know for certain that what we see on the mountain is smoke and not mere vapour. We have necessarily to rely upon our senses for this knowledge. We have already pointed out the dangers that are in the way of our accepting this knowledge as accurate. In addition to

all this, we must know what smoke is and what fire is. If we have any faulty conception of either of them, the whole inference is valueless. We thus see that 'inference' has infinitely more chances of error than direct perception. It will therefore be the height of folly to rely merely upon it to arrive at the right knowledge of any truth, much less of any truth transcending the senses and even the mind.

7. REASONING HOW FAR HELPFUL

Though reasoning cannot thus by itself be a great help to us, it will be of much use to us in pointing out the various fallacies we are apt to be led into in the course of our attempts to understand the truths taught to us by the Vedas. As De Quincey says, the reason of man is like the two walls of a long narrow corridor in which an elastic ball is thrown slantingly at one end. The object of the ball — here compared to the human mind — is to reach the other end; but being thrown slanting it strikes either of the walls and because of its very striking it takes a forward course, but again slanting till it strikes the opposite wall; once again to be deflected onwards but obliquely and so on repeating the process till it reaches the end of the corridor where you have no more side-walls, no more striking, in fact no more motion. Reason thus is a limitation upon the free exercise of the thinking faculty of man, but every impact with it will put us on the way towards the right goal but never on the straight path to it. If we want this — the side-walls — to be *always* with us to guide us, it means that we are only making the corridor longer and the goal farther away. When we thus recognise the limited capacity of reason to help us towards the truth, we also see that reason will go a long way towards guiding us on. It is given to only the very exceptional few to divine the truth

intuitively without the aid of reason. To throw a ball right along the centre of a long corridor towards the other end, without once striking the walls, requires a precision, a balance and a steadiness which are very rarely found. The function of our Sastric practical rules of conduct is to develop this precision, balance and steadiness as well as to heighten the elasticity of the mind itself, so that the goal may be reached as early as possible and with as few impacts as possible. It is only those exceptional few that look right through the corridor unimpeded by the side-walls that can have a glimpse of the light even from the very start. The others have before their perspective only the bare walls -- obstruction, more obstruction, still more obstruction and so on till by a gradual letting in of the light from the other end they are made to realise that obstruction is not by itself the goal, but the freedom from it and the open light of everlasting life and rest at the end. The side-walls can thus never show us the light, but, provided we are really *inclined* to reach the goal, they can keep us in the path and prevent our going away from it. Such is the legitimate scope of Reasoning or Inference.

CHAPTER III

FAITH

1. 'WORD' AND FAITH

The third of the methods of proof that we mentioned in the last chapter is Authority. It will be more accurate to call it 'Word' as do the Indian philosophers. 'Authority' seems to connote an arbitrary spirit which will not brook any disobedience. It may therefore by its very name engender a prejudice against itself in the minds of the moderns whose motto seems to be what they call 'freedom' and what others call 'licence'. Just as direct experience requires, as a condition precedent to right knowledge, the purity of the perceiving senses and just as inference requires a quick intellect, so does 'Word' require an essential attribute in man before it can profess to prove a thing to him. That attribute is called 'Faith.' This term again is usually relegated to credulous fools and no man with present-day notions will tolerate his being accused of 'Faith'. It therefore seems necessary to examine the full significance of these two terms -- Word and Faith.

2. WHAT IS FAITH?

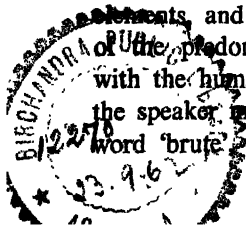
It will be sufficient for our present purpose if it is conceded that every object and the name given to that object are inseparable. The word 'cow' has no independent significance if it does not convey to us the impression of an animal with four legs and so on. The word is thus so connected with the concept it signifies that we cannot dissociate the one from the other. This inseparability of the word and its

significance is the reason why the word when uttered conveys to us at once a true and accurate conception of the object signified. For example, let us take this simple sentence "a cow is grazing." The words "a cow" invariably and unmistakably convey to us the definite impression of an animal. The words "is grazing" likewise convey to us the impression of the action called grazing. If we hear therefore the whole sentence, we get the conception of an animal of a particular species munching grass. We started with saying that the words are always true to their significance. Whenever therefore we hear the sentence "a cow is grazing" we must expect to see a grazing cow, for words never lie nor swerve from their meaning. Suppose however we hear that sentence but find no cow grazing anywhere. We must then try to find out why the sentence has failed to represent the truth. We will usually be able to trace the fault to the speaker. He may not know the language well; he may not have good eyes; he may be a liar. These defects or disqualifications inherent in the speaker contribute to his words losing their true significance. Until we are able to trace these defects and thus explain why the words do not express the truth, we must assume that the words are true and that there *is* a cow grazing somewhere beyond our sight. This statement may seem a little strange to those who have been trained not to believe any statement until its truth is *proved* to them. Our position is just the other way, namely, that everything heard is true until its falsity is proved or is traced to its cause.

A moment's reflection will show that the latter view is the more scientific and practical one. An analysis of our daily doings will be sufficient to prove this. Suppose I go to an unknown part of this town in search of a friend. I am not able to find out his house and have then to ask

the way of some passer-by. He gives me the necessary directions. Suppose now I want him to prove to me the truth of his statement before I consent to take a single step forward; can I ever hope to meet my friend? I *have* to presume the truth of his statement and act accordingly unless, of course, I have reason to think that he is a liar or an ignorant man. On the face of it I can have no suspicion of the veracity of his statement, and his words must be taken to denote what they signify. This passive receptivity of knowledge which enables us to keep before us always the presumption of truth in any statement made to us, until its falsity is apparent or is proved, is called 'Faith'

Let us now take another sentence "The servant is a brute". If we will take the trouble to analyse the quick flashes of thought that run through our minds when we hear this sentence, we will be able to detect these stages: The words will convey to us their true significance that the servant is an animal of the quadruped species. But we will remember at once that the servant is a man and not a quadruped. We will recognise therefore that the words are false to their significance. But here intervenes our firm opinion of the speaker that he is neither a liar nor a man under delusion. This opinion makes us presume that his words must be true in spite of their apparent falsity. We at once go about in search of an interpretation of the words which will preserve the significance of the words, at the same time preserving the integrity of the speaker. We therefore analyse the conception of a brute into its various elements, and in doing so we are able to pitch upon such of the predominant elements as may not be inconsistent with the human personality of the servant. Our regard for the speaker makes us presume that when he mentioned the word 'brute' he did not use the word in its fullest literal



sense but used it only to signify some predominant characteristics which, with other characteristics not here intended to be signified, make up the conception conveyed by the word 'brute.' We conclude that he meant only similarity even though the words on the face of them denote identity between the servant and a brute. We are constrained to place this interpretation upon the sentence, for we are averse to the thought that the words do not represent the truth. This averseness to presume untruth is called 'Faith.' Take again the sentence "Spare the rod and spoil the child." The words, as they stand, convey to us two commands, one to spare the rod and the other to spoil the child. But our commonsense revolts against this interpretation and refuses to accept the two commands as genuine. We are equally averse to the conclusion that the statement was a perverse one, intended to mislead us. We therefore look about for an interpretation which will be true and sensible without violating the significance of the words used. Common sense requires that the sentence should really run "Do not spare the rod and do not spoil the child," but this interpretation will be introducing the exactly opposite proposition to that apparently signified by the original words. To reconcile sense therefore with the actual words used, we arrive at the interpretation "If you spare the rod, you will spoil the child." Why do we thus depart so much from the literal meaning of the words actually used? The only reason that we can give is our unwillingness to ascribe falsehood or meaninglessness to the words used. This unwillingness which persists in us to the extent of saving the truth of the sentence, even by widely departing from a literal interpretation of it, is called 'Faith.'

It will be unnecessary to discuss further instances to show what is the conception designated by the word 'Faith'.

3. FAITH IN VEDA-SASTRAS

This element of faith is such a necessary condition of human existence that it would be impossible to live without it. This presumption of truth is so universal that the workings of our courts of justice, our governments and all other institutions of human society have their justification only because of it. The Law of Evidence will be meaningless if this presumption did not exist. When a man swears to a particular fact, that fact is proved unless there is any inherent improbability in the statement itself or the speaker is otherwise shown to be unreliable. Our philosophers want us to extend the same presumption to the sacred utterances embodied in our Veda-Sastras. Until this presumption is shaken by some strongly suspicious circumstance, they *do* represent truth. As no human author with known defects claims the authorship of the Vedas, and as the Smritis and other Sastras claim to derive their authority only from the Vedas, the only circumstance that can tend to detract from their value is the existence of any inherent improbability in the statements themselves. The function of Mimamsa and allied Sastras is to analyse those statements with a view to search out any such improbability; and the unanimous verdict of these Sastras is that no such improbabilities exist in them, thus demonstrating the eternal truth of those statements. Any person who has even casually glanced through the pages of these Sastras would have realised how critically they have handled the Vedic utterances. The modern characterisation of the Vedas as the

babblings of child-humanity will fade before the more severe strictures of the objector or Purvapakshi. We may make bold to say that our ancients have exhausted all possible methods of attack, and no critic of the present age has been able to urge any fresh point not raised and answered by them. The science of interpretation of the Vedic texts is a highly interesting subject, and it will be a real pleasure to get acquainted with it, even if only to appreciate the acute intelligence and the scientific logic of our great sages. But we leave that subject aside as a consideration of it may not be relevant to our present purpose. Next to the Vedas, the words of our spiritual teachers, Acharyas, command our faith, for here we have the positive advantage of knowing that they have only our welfare at heart and can have no motive to mislead us. Next to them come our parents and all our true well-wishers comprehensively included under the class of 'Aptas'. We need not say that their words are of authority only when they do not run counter to the teachings of the Veda Sastras.

4. FAITH AND RIGHT KNOWLEDGE

In the light of the above observations it will be clear that the 'Word' is a means of bringing home to us 'Faith'. As seeing is but a means for the realisation of the thing seen, as reasoning is but a means for the realisation of the thing inferred, so is the 'Word' but a means for the realisation of the truth conveyed by it. We began by saying that the end of all living beings is to realise in themselves the ideal of absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. We shall now see how far the methods of proof that we have considered till now can help us towards that realisation. The mind and the senses being but finite instruments of knowledge cannot be

expected to convey to us any idea or impression of the Infinite and the Absolute. By inference we can, at the highest, *postulate* the existence of an Infinite and Absolute state of being, but the exact nature of the latter must ever be unknowable. It would seem therefore that only the 'Word' is left to us to really help us towards the goal of life. But the 'Word', as we said before, is only a means and not the end. No amount of repeating the sentence "Sugar is sweet" will convey to us the sweetness of sugar. We must try to realise the truth of the statement by taking up a bit of sugar and putting it in our mouths otherwise the sentence is valueless to us. No amount of book reading or repetition of sacred texts therefore can help us towards a realisation of the promised infinite peace and happiness if we do not care to follow the Sastric directions. Nor can any such be of any value to us unless we are in the first place inclined and prepared to receive instruction from the sacred literature. As we have already said, it is this receptivity of knowledge that is called 'Faith'. The greater this receptivity, the more intense will be our earnestness in carrying out the lessons taught to us. The more the earnestness and the perseverance, the nearer will be the goal. The first condition of any progress therefore is faith in the existence and nature of the goal as taught to us and faith in the efficacy of the means prescribed for attaining that goal. As the goal is yet to be reached and the path yet to be trodden, it is foolish and meaningless to ask for the demonstration of the existence of the goal and the efficacy of the path even at the start. It will be as childish as to expect a demonstration of the sweetness of sugar before we consent to put it into our mouth. We must then have 'Faith' in the 'Word' and follow its dictates. There will be time enough to proclaim it false when we follow its dictates and

yet fail to reach the goal. We have been told by some that this is a stale argument, but we may tell them that truth is ever stale, for if it ever assumes the garb of novelty it ceases to be truth. What other way is there of demonstrating the truth or falsity of a statement than following its dictates and thus reaching or failing to reach the promised goal? There is an immense volume of evidence in the shape of the experience of our sages and others who have followed in their footsteps, that they *did* reach the goal having for their guidance the divine words of the Sruti. Why should we disbelieve them? Why should we suspect them of dishonesty and perverseness to the extent of trying to mislead the generations that were to come? There is absolutely nothing to contradict this overwhelming testimony. We have only the mere words of those who have not cared to tread the paths prescribed, and who are therefore utterly incompetent to speak about the efficacy or otherwise of the paths; they can know nothing about them.

5. FAITH AND DESIRE

As observed already, 'Faith' is a necessary condition of any progress towards the goal, but it is *only the first step* towards it, and we have many more stages to pass through before we can hope to reach the goal. An analysis of every conscious activity will disclose to us three stages:— (1) Knowledge of the object to be attained and of the means of attaining it, (2) Desire for the object and (3) Activity in pursuance of that desire. Unless these three elements are present there can be no responsible action. I may look into a railway guide and learn the route to Banaras. But knowledge of the route cannot take me to Banaras unless I desire to go there. Again, I may know the route to Banaras, and I

may very much desire to go there, but I cannot actually reach Banaras if I do not move my limbs. The function of faith is only that of the railway guide. By the strength of that faith we will be put in possession of knowledge of many things which we cannot learn for ourselves. The greater our faith in the truth of the statements describing to us these things, the greater will be our desire to attain them if they are good, or to avoid them if they are bad. Knowledge therefore will lead us on to the second stage of desire. Desire getting stronger and stronger will compel us to act, so that we satisfy that desire. Each previous step therefore will naturally lead us on to the next, if we are firm in that step. If our knowledge is hazy, there will arise no desire; and if our desire is indifferent there will follow no action.

As may be expected, faith that was instrumental in securing for us the knowledge of the far off object and the means to attain it, must persist also in the latter two stages. Faith in the stage of desire will teach us what is desirable and what is not—not in the sense that we are forbidden to desire any particular thing, for desire cannot be forbidden, but that we will be taught which desires of ours are practically attainable with our present means and in our present environments. If this faith is wanting, we will be letting loose all our desires, and as desires have a habit of insisting upon their satisfaction we will find ourselves engaged in all sorts of activities towards the fulfilment of those desires. But, as God has, fortunately or unfortunately for us, limited our capacities, we will find the means at our command insufficient to help us in those activities or we may find the environments hostile to our unlimited scope for action—with the result that all sorts of passion like anger, hatred, jealousy and the

rest of them will arise in us on account of the non-fulfilment of our desires. When these evil passions once arise, it will be very difficult to get rid of them. When once a labourer in the field begins to envy the rich man riding by in a motor car, he must then and for ever afterwards bid farewell to peace of mind; he will gradually learn to hate the rich man, then try to do away with the class of the rich, and indulge in all sorts of activities for pulling down the rich to the level of the poor, finding in the end however to his eternal disappointment that the poor man clothed in new-earned powers is in no way better than the hated rich. Current of events in the modern world is a sufficient proof of the danger of unbridled desires.

A man under the influence of a particular desire cannot judge for himself whether that desire is legitimate or practically attainable, for he is biassed in its favour. He therefore needs to be taught the nature and extent of the desires that he can legitimately foster as well as of the desires that he must learn to put down in his own interest. To determine this, we have again to resort to faith. If a man is thirsty when laid up with fever, he will be only harming himself if he insists upon drinking cold water in disobedience to the physician's directions. He must have faith in his physician's word and put down the desire for cold water. There is no use saying — "Why should I not drink it while so many others are drinking?" For, the law of medicine is inexorable in that it prohibits the drinking of cold water by the fevered patient. So with desires for all objects, temporal or spiritual. One function of our Sastras is to define for each man his legitimate desires in the circumstances and environments in which he is placed. We must have faith in the value of such defi-

native provision. If we have no such faith, but persist in giving unbridled scope to our desires, we are sure to come to grief. We may desire to attain Moksha before tomorrow, but the Sastra steps in and says — “No, Sir, it is not such an easy matter. You are yet far away from the path to it. You may have it in view as the last goal, but your immediate desire must be proportionate to your present capacity.” In short, the Sastras, by a proper regulation of the immediately attainable ends at the several intermediate stages of progress, furnish us with a perfect and well-graded training ground suited to each one’s capacity for the attaining of the same goal of absolute bliss at the end.

6. FAITH AND ACTION

If faith is thus necessary even for regulating our desires, it needs no saying that faith should persist also in the third stage of activity. But unfortunately for modern India, though we have faith in the teachings of the Vedanta, we have faith in the legitimacy of the desire for happiness, limited or absolute, we have absolutely no faith in the actions prescribed as necessary for the attainment of that desire. All of us desire to be healthy but are averse to following the laws of health. All of us desire strength but refuse to take exercise. All of us are desirous of wealth but are unwilling to work for it. Why is it so? We have not the necessary faith in the capacity of the laws of health to keep us free of ailments, of exercise to strengthen our muscles, and of work to bring us wealth. When we begin to doubt the efficacy of the means, when we begin to doubt the certainty of reaching our goal, we fall away from action. For any action therefore to be fruitful, we must imbue it with faith in the certainty of its taking us to the goal.

7. FAITH INDISPENSABLE

Faith, being thus an essential condition of right knowledge, legitimate desire and fruitful action, is indispensable for the attainment of any goal. It is infinitely more so in the search after the Ultimate Truth. It should therefore be the earnest prayer of us all, who claim and hope to realise the perfect and unlimited state of existence, knowledge and bliss sooner or later, that God should in His infinite mercy and love grant us the faith to believe in His teachings and the courage and perseverance to follow the Sastric directions.

CHAPTER IV

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Philosophers from time immemorial, from the beginning of creation if there was one, have sought to define God but all unsuccessfully. Equally unsuccessful have been their attempts to understand the universe and it will be very difficult therefore to find any satisfactory definition of these two conceptions. To define a thing properly we must first know it completely. If any person should attempt to give a definition without such a complete knowledge, he can mention therein only a few characteristics which *he* understands to be the essentials of the thing sought to be defined. Another may consider other characteristics more essential and embody them in *his* definition. Both of them may be equally true, but neither of them can be completely true. To a true Bhakta, or devotee, God may seem to be Mercy and Love, to a sinner the Avenger and the Just, to the virtuous the Good and the Giver. All these may be true, but none of the qualities indicated can express or define God in His true essence and fulness. Similar is the case with the universe. To the pessimist it is all misery, to the light-hearted all pleasure, to the fatalist all doom, to the sceptic all chance. None of these is a definition of the universe, but is a definition only of the standpoint of the definer. To rise above all standpoints is not possible for the limited intellect of man, and it is therefore impossible for us to define exactly what is God and what is the universe. It is sufficient for our present purpose that we

have *some* conception of God even though vague and indefinite, and an equally vague and indefinite conception of the universe. The primary object of this chapter is to place before the ordinary reader an idea of the relationship between God and the universe, and in the course of doing so we may also convey to him some impression of the way in which the ancient system of Vedic philosophy has defined them.

2. OUR PROBLEMS

Existence, as we know it, can be comprehensively and completely divided, as we have already stated, under two heads—the *person* and the *thing*; in other words the *perceiver* and the *perceived*. That the perceiver and the perceived are distinct from one another, is shown by the very necessity of the process of perception. But this same act of perception shows us that the two *are not* absolutely distinct but are inter-related to each other. The unravelling of the mystery of this relationship between these two is in truth the goal of all philosophies. What is the universe that we see around us? Who are we that are seeing it? And why do we see it? If these problems are solved, the relationship between God and the universe will become clear.

3. INCOMPETENCE OF REASON

Each system of philosophy has tried to solve these problems in its own way; but the fact that there *are* various such systems is itself proof that none of them is completely satisfactory. There is evidently some inherent defect in all systems of thought that denies full illumination and makes the final solution ever elude our grasp. When we profess to determine the relationship between the perceiver and the per-

ceived, we must cease to belong to the categories of the perceiver and of the perceived, if we want our solution to be correct. If we want to impartially judge a case, we must be neither the plaintiff nor the defendant. According to our Sastras therefore, the only standpoint from which we can really solve and realise the relationship between the subject or perceiver and the object or perceived is when we transcend both. No amount of reasoning can enable us to arrive at such a stage, for all reasoning assumes more or less the stable existence of the reasoning perceiver and in a way the stable existence of the perceived as well. On the other hand, reasoning by its very nature will be a hindrance to us. If reason then, the supreme and invaluable gift said to be vouchsafed by God to man, is to be of no help to us, it would seem we have really no guide at all. Happily for us Hindus, the Divine Words of the Sruti, the Revealed Veda, come to our rescue and solve our problems for us. In fact, such Revealed Words alone in the world can rightly solve them. For those who have no faith in such Words, but persist in trying to arrive at an independant solution of the problems, they will for ever remain insoluble, and the highest truth must ever remain for them the Unknown and the Unknowable.

4. IDREALISM

Before we consider the solution given to us by the Sruti, it will be useful to understand how the man-made systems of thought seek to solve the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. There are some systems which assume the permanency of the perceiver and seek to analyse the perceived. To them the perceiver is a constant persistent individuality and the universe is an everchanging restless mass of

phenomena cognised by the former as the objects of his perception. The universe is, according to them, made up only of the successive sense impressions formed on the retina of individual consciousness. In short, the universe is a "bundle of sensations". It has therefore no independent existence without the perceiver. What we call the universe is only a void, but peopled with the creations of our own conscious self. These idealistic philosophers are called *Jagatsoonyavadis*.

5. MATERIALISM

Another set of philosophers assume the permanent existence of the perceived universe and seek to analyse the perceiver. To them an analysis of what we call the soul shows that it is nothing but a sum total of successive sense perceptions created by the objects perceived. The perceiver has no independent existence without the perceived. The soul is really a void in its essence, but seems to us to be a positive entity because of the uninterrupted flow of successive perceptions of phenomena. Though the water in the river is always flowing and is therefore impermanent and ever-changing, do we not give the flowing water the positive name of 'river' simply because this regular incessant succession of water is sufficient to form the basis in our mind of a concrete conception? The river is really a notional entity — not a thing by itself — but becoming the object of a conception because of the ceaseless flow of water. The soul is similarly only a notional entity — a mere void — but becoming the object of a conception simply because of the ceaseless though ever-changing succession of perceptions of phenomena. These materialistic philosophers are called *Atmasoonyavadis*.

6. THE ABOVE SYSTEMS EXAMINED

These two sets of philosophers — the Jagatsoonyavâdis and the Atmasoonyavâdis — thus try to solve the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived by denying the existence of the one or the other. The fallacies in their respective reasonings are not difficult to find out. If the universe has no independent existence other than that of the perceiver, then it must be a bundle of sensations of the perceiver's own making. The existence of pain, sorrow and misery in the world is incompatible with the creative power thus postulated of the soul, for the soul would never care to create any sensation harmful or distasteful to itself. Again, the rise of similar perceptions in all of us when we see for example a chair — if it is a chair to me, it is a chair to you — shows that the perceptions take their origin as much from the perceived as from the perceiver. This characteristic persistence in each object of perception, which keeps it distinct from and unconfused with every other object, cannot by any trick of reasoning be made to disappear from the world. Turning to the other set of philosophers, the materialists, we see that the faculty of recollection which connects the past experiences and the present is impossible of reconciliation with the theory of an ever-changing perceiver. A substantial stratum of consciousness, over which the successive varying perceptions of phenomena may flow on continuously, leaving the stratum unmodified and unaffected, is an absolute necessity for the existence of the varying perceptions themselves. All flowing water is not a river except when it flows in a defined course over a permanent *non-flowing* bed. These enquiries lead us to two conclusions: *firstly*, that the perceived universe has, though subject to change, an insistent dura-

bility of its own, independent of the perceiver; *secondly*, that the perceiver has an insistent personality of his own, independent of the object perceived. We come again therefore only to the point from which we started.

7. SANKHYAS

We will now take up a third set of philosophers. They realise this essential difference and incompatibility of the perceiver and the perceived *inter se*. The perceiver is conscious, unchanging and unchangeable in essence. The perceived is unconscious and ever-changing. All sensation is the result of contact between these two. All pain and misery is the result of this contact whether it follows immediately or after a short-lived appearance of pleasure. To eliminate pain and misery therefore from our experience, we must for ever remain solely conscious and unchanging, that is have no sort of relationship with the perceived. We must alienate ourselves completely from the perceived and be simply ourselves. The absence of realisation of this distinction is the cause of pain. Once we realise that the perceiver is not and cannot be in any way *related* to the perceived, we are free from pain and to that end must all activities be directed. This denial of relationship between the perceiver and the perceived, this insistence on their absolute distinctness, is the basis of the Sankhya school of philosophy. But, if we analyse this view, we will find that our problems are as unsolved as ever. We realise in every day experience that the perceiver and the perceived *are* inter-related, and to say that from the incompatibility of their natures they *cannot* be interrelated is only a negation of fact, and no solution. This system may be helpful as suggesting a course of training to free ourselves to a great

extent from the trammels of the world, but it cannot be sufficient to solve our philosophic doubts or to lead us on to the realisation of the ultimate truth.

8. TRUE PHILOSOPHY

All the above three systems are only partially true and therefore also partially wrong. A study of them and of the objections to them will prove to us that there is an aspect of the perceiver which does not depend for its existence on the perceived, and that there is an aspect of the perceived which apparently does not depend for its existence on the perceiver. It is these aspects that are the opposites of each other and therefore incompatible with each other according to the Sankhyas. There is however another aspect of the perceiver and another aspect of the perceived which are dependent on each other, so much so that we are enabled to deny the existence of the one or the other. A system of philosophy to perfectly satisfy us must take into account these two aspects of the perceiver, one of which cannot co-exist with the perceived and the other cannot exist without the perceived, and similarly also the two aspects of the perceived, one of which cannot co-exist with the perceiver and the other cannot exist without the perceiver. The Vedanta furnishes such an ideal system of philosophy and falsifies the claims of the other systems to solve our problems, and we shall directly proceed to explain it.

9. ACTIVITY

I am now speaking. What does it mean? I am now relating myself to a particular kind of activity called 'speech'. My speech cannot arise without me. I the speaker *as such* can have no existence without my speech. But all of you

will agree with me that when you grasp my speech you do not grasp me, and when you see me you cannot see my speech. That is, my speech and myself have distinct individualities but interrelated to each other. I can exist without my speech. My speech can live long after I, the speaker, am gone. The connecting link therefore between me and my speech is the act of speaking. What then is this act of speaking? Before I open my mouth my speech is already with me but merged in my capacity to speak. This potentiality of speech that inheres in me is infinite and indefinite. I have the capacity to speak in any language I like and in any pitch that I like. But this infinite and undefined capacity translating itself into kinetic action must be confined to a particular language and a particular pitch. In other words, the act of speaking is a limitation upon my infinite capacity to speak. The act of speaking is also only a manifestation in concrete of the capacity to speak. The capacity to speak cannot exist independently of me. My speech can never come into existence but for my capacity to speak. But I can exist without my speech. Such is the relation between the perceiver and the perceived. We shall give a few more examples to make our meaning clearer.

10. QUALITY

We all have some conception of electricity. What it is no scientist has been able to define, but all are agreed that it saturates the whole atmosphere and, for aught we know, it pervades the whole universe. It is omnipresent, invisible, intangible. How then do we know that it exists? Because we see its activities, as motive power, heat, light etc. We will take one of such activities and analyse it. We have seen